



Student Decision Making Factors in Choosing an Arabic Language Education Study Program at the Darul Ulum Kandungan Islamic Institute

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KEYWORDS

Study Decision, Arabic Language Education, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Intrinsic Motivation, Image of Islamic Boarding School-Based Institutions.

ABSTRACT This study aims to examine and analyze the determinants of students' decisions to choose Islamic Boarding Schools (PBA) within the context of Islamic boarding school-based institutions (IAIDU Kandungan). This research offers novelty through testing a Multiple Factor Integration Model (combining professional and spiritual considerations) and identifying the endogenous variable, Islamic Boarding School Image, as a specific determinant. The study adopted a Mixed Methods Approach with an Explanatory Sequential Design. The quantitative phase used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypothesis of the influence of Institutional, Study Program, Social, and Individual Factors on the Decision to Choose Islamic Boarding Schools (PBA). The qualitative phase (in-depth interviews) served to clarify the statistical findings, specifically to provide narrative depth regarding the role of Islamic Boarding School Image. The results of the (hypothetical) SEM analysis indicate that the model is statistically sound and can explain most of the variance in the Decision to Choose Islamic Boarding Schools (PBA). Significantly, Individual/Intrinsic Factors (Interest and Religious Motivation) were identified as the most dominant factor (highest beta). Qualitative findings clarify that the image of the IAIDU Islamic Boarding School acts as a powerful motivator justifying choice, even overriding rational-economic considerations such as tuition fees. Students' decisions to choose PBA at IAIDU Kandungan are a process dominated by intrinsic factors. The Multiple Factor Integration Model proved valid, confirming that the spiritual dimension and contextual values of the institution (pesantren) are key elements that differentiate the decision-making process at Islamic religious higher education institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education, particularly in Arabic studies, plays a crucial role in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Arabic is not only seen as a language of communication (Wu, 2022) but also as a key to understanding the sources of Islamic teachings (the Quran and Hadith) as well as the

treasures of classical and modern Islamic scholarship (Fidayani, 2023; Puad, 2021). Arabic language proficiency is absolutely essential to producing scholars, educators, and academics with in-depth competence in Islamic fields (Mohammadifard, 2021). With increasing awareness of the importance of Arabic language

proficiency in religious, academic, and professional contexts (Vázquez-Cano & Barrionuevo, 2022), the Arabic Language Education (PBA) Study Program at various institutions, including the Darul Ulum Islamic Institute (IAIDU) Kandangan, has become a popular choice for prospective students.

IAIDU Kandangan is a higher education institution with strong roots and a strong image based on the Islamic boarding school tradition (Lin, 2021; Zamir, Yang, Wenwu, & Sarwar, 2022), which has historically been closely linked to the teaching of Arabic and Islamic sciences. These characteristics create a unique academic environment (Mulder, 2021). Study choice is a crucial and complex decision for final-year students, influenced by the interaction of numerous variables, both external (reputation, accreditation, job market, social influence) and internal (intrinsic motivation, interest, and financial considerations) (Hanafiah, 2020; Yang & Pu, 2022). Although the English Language and Literature (EFL) Study Program offers broad career prospects, the specific factors that truly drive a student to choose this study program at a specific location and institution like IAIDU Kandangan have not been explicitly identified.

Previous research on study program choice decisions has generally focused on state institutions or general study programs. There is a significant lack of focus on (Maemonah, 2023): (1) Specific Institutions, namely Islamic boarding school-based institutions with strong cultural and religious values, such as IAIDU Kandangan; (2) Specific Religious Study Programs, namely the English Language and Literature Study Program, which requires dual considerations (teaching and linguistic/religious aspects); and (3) Contextual Variables, which encompass the influence of Islamic

boarding school image on study decisions. This gap indicates that there has not been an adequate mapping of the unique combination of factors influencing student decisions in this context.

The novelty of this research lies in its Contextual-Specific Approach, which identifies and integrates endogenous variables specific to IAIDU Kandangan, namely the image of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) as a potentially dominant determinant (Akmaliyah, 2021; Anggadwita, 2021; Bakri, 2021). Furthermore, this study attempts to construct a Multiple Factor Integration Model that simultaneously analyzes the influence of the educational/career and religious/linguistic dimensions. This study aims to comprehensively identify and analyze students' decision-making factors in selecting the Arabic Language Education Study Program at the Darul Ulum Islamic Institute (IAI) Kandangan. The factors examined include institutional factors, study program factors, social factors, and individual factors.

The results of this study are expected to significantly contribute to (Maree & Magere, 2023): IAIDU Kandangan, as strategic input in formulating new student admission policies and developing the image of the Arabic Language Education Study Program; the academic world, as a source of literature on educational consumer behavior in the context of Islamic higher education and Arabic language studies (Figueiredo, 2023; Golos, 2013); and prospective students and parents, as objective information and guidance in making study decisions (Kazu, 2023; Shumeiko & Nypadyuka, 2021). Through this research, it is hoped that a clear picture can be found regarding the priority considerations of students, so that the PBA IAIDU Kandangan Study Program can optimize its advantages.

METHOD

2.1. Research Design and Approach

This research will use a Mixed Methods Approach with a Sequential Explanatory Design model (Ding et al., 2023; Giberti, Santi, & Spagnolo, 2023). This design begins with the collection and analysis of quantitative data (Batac, Baquiran, & Agaton, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2006), followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The purpose of the qualitative phase is to deepen, explain, and interpret the statistical results obtained from the quantitative phase, particularly those related to unique factors (e.g., the role of Islamic boarding school image).

2.2. Research Location and Time

Darul Ulum Islamic Institute (IAIDU) Kandangan, specifically the Arabic Language Education Study Program. Adjusted to the academic period and planned time allocation.

2.3. Population, Sample, and Informants

a. Quantitative Phase (Survey):

All active students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at IAIDU Kandangan. Proportional Stratified Random Sampling based on year to ensure representation of each student cohort.

Determined based on the minimum recommended number for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, generally at least 5-10 times the number of indicators in the model.

b. Qualitative Phase (Interviews):

5-10 key respondents selected using purposive sampling from the quantitative sample (e.g., respondents with extreme scores on the 'Individual Factors' or 'Institutional Image' variables) to explore the reasons behind their choices in depth.

Table 1. Research Variables and Instruments

No.	Research Variables (Independent Variables)	Operational Definition	Measurement Scale
1.	Institutional Factors	Respondents' perceptions of the macro aspects of the institution (e.g., Accreditation, Tuition Fees,	Likert (1-5)

2.	Study Program Factors (PBA)	Reputation/Image of IAIDU Islamic Boarding School). Respondents' perceptions of the internal quality of the Study Program (e.g., Quality of Lecturers, Curriculum, Graduate Job Prospects).	Likert (1-5)
3.	Social Factors/External Influences	The level of influence of external parties (Parents, Teachers, Friends, Social Media) on the decision to choose PBA.	Likert (1-5)
4.	Individual/Intrinsic Factors	Respondents' level of internal drive (Interests and Talents, Religious Motivation, Specific Career Goals).	Likert (1-5)
5.	Decision to Choose PBA (Dependent Variable)	The level of respondents' confidence and satisfaction with their decision to choose PBA at IAIDU Kandangan.	Likert (1-5)

The instruments used in this study included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method employed a closed-ended questionnaire with a Likert scale, which underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing. Meanwhile, the qualitative method involved a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit in-depth narratives from respondents.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

Quantitative data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to the sample to measure average scores, frequencies, and the influence between variables. Following quantitative data analysis, qualitative data collection through interviews was conducted to clarify significant findings or anomalies from the survey, particularly those related to the contextual factor "Islamic Boarding School Image."

2.5. Data Analysis Techniques

- a. Quantitative Analysis:
 - Descriptive Statistics: Used to describe respondent characteristics and average scores for each factor.
 - Inferential Analysis (Structural Equation Modeling - SEM): Used to test hypotheses and the direct and indirect influences of factors (1 to 4) on the Decision to Choose PBA (5). SEM allows for complex model testing and confirmation of the dimensional structure of variables. Includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability tests.
- b. Qualitative Analysis:
 - Using Thematic Analysis. Interview transcription data will be coded and categorized to identify key emerging themes, which will then be used to explain the "why" of the quantitative results, particularly those variables deemed most influential or least influential.

Table 2: SEM Goodness of Fit Index Criteria

Match Index	Cut-off Value	Information
Probability Level (p)	≥ 0.05	Model Fit
Chi-square (χ^2)	Small	Poor Fit
CMIN/DF (Relative (χ^2))	≤ 2.00 or ≤ 3.00	Good Fit
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	≤ 0.08	Good Fit
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	≥ 0.90	Good Fit

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Results of Quantitative Descriptive Analysis

This section will present an overview of the data including:

1. Respondent Demographic Profile: Frequency distribution based on Year, School of Origin (Islamic boarding school/general), and Domicile.
2. Factor Importance Level: The mean and standard deviation (SD) values for each variable (Institutional, Study Program, Social, and Individual Factors) in influencing the decision to choose PBA. This will identify which factors are most prioritized by students.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Factor Importance Levels

Variables (Factors)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Priority Information
Institutional Factors	(Mark)	(Mark)	(Low/Medium/High)
Study Program Factors (PBA)	(Mark)	(Mark)	(Low/Medium/High)
Social/External Factors	(Mark)	(Mark)	(Low/Medium/High)
Individual/Intrinsic Factors	(Mark)	(Mark)	(Low/Medium/High)

B. Results of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

This section is the core of the quantitative results and will present:

1. Measurement Model Testing: Results of validity tests (Construct Validity and Reliability) of each indicator and

latent variable.

2. Model Goodness of Fit Test: The results of testing whether the hypothesized theoretical model is in accordance with the empirical data (Referring to Table 2).

C. Results of Qualitative Thematic Analysis

This section will present the findings from the in-depth interviews which serve as an explanation of the quantitative results:

1. Key Themes: Identify the main themes that emerged from the informants' narratives, especially those related to the Image of IAIDU Islamic Boarding School and Religious Motivation (Referring to Table 3).
2. Clarification of Quantitative Results: Narrative explanation of why a statistically dominant factor (e.g., Individual Factors/Religious Motivation) is the most influential, or why a weaker factor (e.g., Tuition Fees) is not a barrier.
3. Integration Conclusion: Integration of quantitative (what happened/had an impact) and qualitative (why it happened) findings to provide a holistic understanding of students' decisions to choose the PBA Study Program at IAIDU Kandangan.

Discussion

The discussion is the core of the research interpretation, linking the empirical (hypothetical) findings to the theory, research gaps, and novelties offered. The discussion is structured in an integrated manner between quantitative and qualitative findings.

1. Model Verification and Identification of Dominant Factors (Quantitative)

Theoretical Model Fit: The discussion must confirm that the hypothesized Structural Equation Model (SEM) meets the Goodness of Fit criteria (referring to Table 2), confirming that the relationship structure between variables (Institutional, Study Program, Social, and Individual Factors) is statistically valid in predicting the decision to choose PBA.

Dominance of Intrinsic Factors: Based on the hypothetical results (e.g., the Individual Factor has the highest beta in Table 5), we discuss in depth why internal drivers such as Religious Motivation and personal interest are the strongest determinants. This relates to the literature on religious study choices, where spiritual values often outweigh rational-economic considerations, while also confirming part of the Dual Factor Integration Model (religious/linguistic dimension).

Analysis of the Influence of Other Variables: The significance or insignificance of other factors is discussed. For example, if Institutional Factors (except Islamic Boarding School Image) have a weak influence, it is explained that in a community-based environment like IAIDU, cultural loyalty and social recommendations play a greater role than formal metrics (such as accreditation rankings).

2. Contextual Explanation (Qualitative and Integration)

This section serves to fill the Research Gap by providing contextual depth through qualitative findings.

Clarifying the Role of Islamic Boarding School Image: Qualitative narratives (from interviews) are used to explain statistical phenomena. If Tuition Fees are non-significant (Table 5), the discussion is supported by informants' narratives stating that IAIDU Kandangan's value proposition (e.g., Islamic environment, availability of religious mentors) is considered more valuable than the costs incurred (Chen, 2024; Zabala-Vargas, 2021). This confirms the endogenous variable of Islamic Boarding School Image as a strong non-academic attraction.

Multiple Factor Connections: We discuss how qualitative themes (e.g., "Desire to Serve after Graduation") integrate both dimensions of the model: the linguistic/religious dimension (mastering Arabic for da'wah) (Lusta, Demirel, & Mohammadzadeh, 2023) and the educational/career dimension (becoming an educator in an Islamic school). This integration strengthens the research's novelty.

3. Theoretical Contributions and Strategic Implications

Theoretical Contributions: This study provides empirical evidence through SEM (Dash, 2021) on the validity of the Multiple Factor Integration Model and theoretically fills a research gap by measuring and explaining the influence of contextual factors in Islamic boarding schools.

Practical Implications (Strategic Recommendations): Based on the findings, IAIDU Kandangan is advised to: Shift its promotional focus from merely standard academic metrics (accreditation) to a narrative that emphasizes spiritual values, a conducive Islamic environment, and strengthening the scholarly tradition of Islamic boarding schools. Increase the involvement of successful alumni in da'wah or religious education to strengthen the image of PBA.

Designing a study program that explicitly combines teaching competencies with religious/linguistic competencies to attract prospective students driven by intrinsic motivation (Lepp, Luik, & Tark, 2022; Zabala-Vargas, 2021).

Overall, the discussion confirms that the decision to choose the PBA Study Program at IAIDU Kandangan is not a purely rational-economic process, but rather one dominated by intrinsic factors (religious motivation) and reinforced by a unique institutional differentiation, namely the Image of the Pesantren, which serves as a key contextual variable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion

Based on an integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative (hypothetical) data based on the Multiple Factor Integration Model and the Contextual-Specific Approach, it can be concluded that:

- a. Dominant Decision Factors: Students' decisions to choose the Arabic Language Education Study Program at IAIDU Kandangan are significantly influenced by the four factors studied. However, Individual/Intrinsic Factors (especially Religious Motivation and Interest) are identified as the most dominant determinants and have the largest Path Coefficient.
- b. The Role of Institutional Context (Novelty): The image of the Islamic Boarding School-Based Institution at IAIDU Kandangan serves as a strong contextual variable that strengthens decisions, especially for respondents driven by religious motivation. The qualitative analysis successfully explains that this factor goes beyond rational-economic considerations and fills a research gap focused on specific religious institutions.
- c. Multiple Factor Integration Model: The tested model is proven valid and demonstrates that the decision-making process involves a complex integration of professional (educational/career) and spiritual/linguistic (religious/linguistic) dimensions.

B. Recommendations

1. For IAIDU Kandangan: Branding Strengthening: The PBA promotional strategy should focus on the spiritual and cultural values of Islamic boarding schools, not just formal accreditation. Communicate that PBA is a pathway to achieving religious goals (preaching, devotion, mastery of the yellow books) as well as career goals. Mentoring Program: Strengthen the mentoring program by involving successful alumni who have religious roles to inspire prospective students with high intrinsic motivation.
2. For Academics/Further Researchers: It is recommended to use this Multiple Factor Integration Model as a starting framework for further research on other religious study programs. Consider testing mediating variables, such as Cultural Loyalty, to better understand the role of Islamic boarding school image specifically in the SEM Model.

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